

Thank you for your comment, Tyler Edgar.

The comment tracking number that has been assigned to your comment is OSTS2012D50021.

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Comment ID: OSTS2012D50021

First Name: Tyler

Middle Initial:

Last Name: Edgar

Organization: National Council of Churches

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Privacy Preference: Don't withhold name or address from public record

Attachment: Thank you Letter to Interior-Grand Canyon and Oil Shale.pdf

Comment Submitted:

Mr. Ken Salazar
Secretary
Department of the Interior
1849 C Street NW
Washington DC 20240

February 29, 2012

Dear Secretary Salazar,

As faith based organizations and religious institutions, we write to express our gratitude for recent decisions made by the Department of the Interior, regarding uranium mining in the Grand Canyon, as well as removing two million acres of public land from oil shale development. As people of faith, we are called to serve as stewards of God's great Creation and we believe that lands serve as a place for reflection, prayer, and time with God. Each of these actions taken by the Department of the Interior will ensure more places and spaces are available, while limiting the amount of large scale development that can cause detrimental impacts to the lands and all those that depend on them.

Mining for uranium in the Grand Canyon has long been a controversial issue. Though we, as communities of faith, do not share a collective position on the use of nuclear power as an energy source, we do share the belief that mining for uranium is not appropriate in fragile places such as the Grand Canyon. The beauty of this place is irreplaceable and surface mining of this nature would have a devastating long-term impact on the health of the Grand Canyon and the areas that surround it.

In addition to protecting the beauty of the Grand Canyon, we stand in solidarity with the tribal communities that oppose mining in the Grand Canyon and have cultural and spiritual ties to the Canyon. The Hopi, Navajo, and Havasupai, along with other tribal entities, oppose expanded mining and have suffered from historical mining in the region that has contaminated the local water and air.

Finally, your decision to withdraw more than two million acres from proposed oil shale development is appropriate for this time and the place. Designating any public lands for energy development that is not yet commercially viable is not a wise use of the lands that have been given to us. Stewardship in our traditions addresses stewardship of all our gifts – including money and Creation.

Within the territory withdrawn from oil shale development lies Adobe Town a unique formation in the heart of Wyoming's Red Desert. Adobe Town represents those parts of God's Creation that are worthy of permanent protection. While we believe that energy development is appropriate for certain parts of God's Creation, there are places and spaces that should remain untouched so that future generations can enjoy the beauty of Creation while also having a place to pray and reflect as Christ, Moses, and Abraham did in Biblical times.

Thank you for recognizing that using God's Creation wisely and protecting unique and valuable parts of Creation should be central in our development of land use practices and policy. We look forward to working with you in the future as you continue to plan for the use of public lands all across the United States.

Sincerely,

Church of the Brethren

Columban Center for Advocacy and Outreach

The Episcopal Church

Maryknoll Office of Global Concerns

National Council of Churches USA

Presbyterian Church (USA) Office of Public Witness

Union for Reform Judaism

Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations

United Church of Christ – Justice and Witness Ministries

United Methodist Church – General Board of Church and Society